



## Press release

Brussels, May 5th 1998

# New perspectives for the Clean Clothes Campaign after the verdict of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal

The report of the session of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal held in Brussels on May 2nd and 3rd 1998 provides the Clean Clothes Campaign with new tools and perspectives for the future.

The Tribunal draws some important conclusions concerning the violations of workers' rights in the garment and sportswear industries:

- There is a **striking similarity in working conditions** in the garment and sportswear industries all over the world. The same violations of basic labour rights can be found on all continents where products are made for export to the European market.
- Due to their inferior position within labour markets, it is predominantly **women** who work in this sector. In general, feminisation of poverty was noted, with women often carrying the main responsibility of providing for the basic needs of the family.
- Given the structure of the garment and sportswear industries, the **responsibility** for these violations lies clearly with large multinational companies - both retailers and producers.
- Independent monitoring of codes of conduct is a necessity. The monitoring structure must feature the direct involvement of trade unions and NGOs at the highest level of decision-making.
- Codes of conduct are **a tool** to further the aims of improving working conditions for each individual worker, empowering workers and strengthening workers' movements.

The International Forum on Clean Clothes was an important step in the international struggle for better working conditions.

- 15 witnesses (workers, researchers, trade unionists and NGO representatives) from 10 countries testified on the behaviour of seven multinational companies.
- 10 Clean Clothes Campaigns in Europe and representatives of similar initiatives in North America prepared and participated in the Forum.
- 1.200 people attended the opening session in the Congress Palace and the 'Made in Dignity' party that followed.
- The Forum brought together trade unions, consumer organisations and NGOs from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, North America, Eastern and Western Europe.
- The Swedish retailer *H&M* attended the Forum and responded to the testimonies that were presented regarding their production.

The conclusions and recommendations of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal present the Clean Clothes Campaign with new perspectives:

- The Clean Clothes Campaigns will use the recommendations of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal to demand information from the companies through legal procedures; and to sue companies that are violating laws and codes of conduct. **The right of the consumer** to be informed is established in different sources of national and international legislation.
- The Forum has given new impetus to the ongoing **cooperation** of the Campaign with trade unions and NGOs in countries where garments and sportswear are produced.

In addition, Clean Clothes Campaigns in each country will continue to mobilise public opinion **to pressure the companies** to accept their responsibilities. This applies to companies that have developed their own code of conduct, however insufficient, as well as those companies that have not yet taken steps to develop policies concerning working conditions.

The Clean Clothes Campaigns will continue to use international sporting events, such as the upcoming World Cup in Paris, to draw attention to the violation of workers' rights in the factories, for example, of the sponsor Adidas.

The Clean Clothes Campaigns express their solidarity with the Global March against Child Labour.

European Clean Clothes Campaigns  
(Belgium, the Netherlands, the UK, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland,  
Austria)



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